# MUSEUM NEWS

WINTER 1966

# GREEK VASES IN TOLEDO

This booklet presents a selection of the most important Greek vases in the collection of this Museum.

While the first acquisition by this Museum of a Greek vase took place as early as 1912, it was in 1916 that George W. Stevens, the Museum's first director, made a major purchase in this field when he acquired at public auction a group of 50 vases from the famed Cesnola Collection.

The majority of the vases here illustrated, however, and probably the most significant examples in the collection, have been acquired during the past 12 years with funds bequeathed by the Museum's founder, Edward Drummond Libbey.

The vases described and illustrated here have been arranged chronologically. Greek vases were formed in traditional, useful shapes and decorated with figures drawn with a fine brush or sometimes incised into the clay with a sharp instrument. Since the decoration tells us much about the life and belief of the Greeks, and the shape about the use of the vases, the description on the following pages comments on the subjects illustrated and the vases' uses. We are indebted to Selden Washington, of our staff, for this text.

*Otto Wittmann, Director*


# MUSEUM NEWS

***THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART***

***FOUNDED BY EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY***

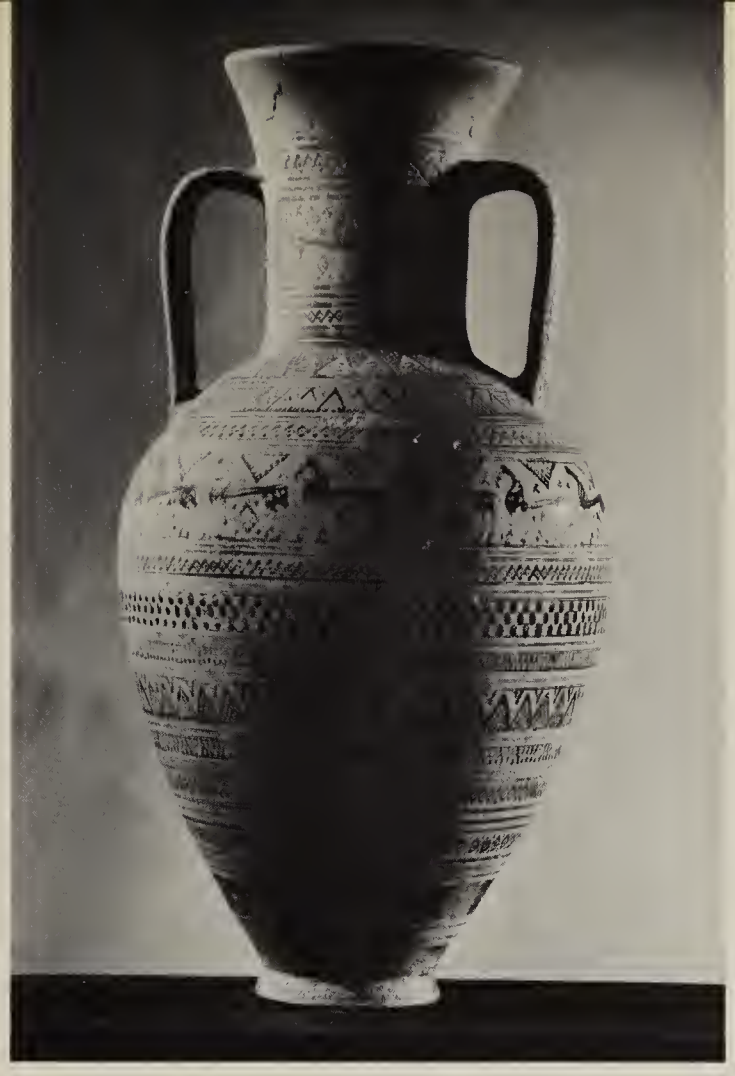
WINTER 1962 ***New Series: Volume 5, Number 4***

EDITOR: Otto Wittmann

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Millard F. Rogers, Jr.


COVER: *Hydria. Attributed to the Antimenes Painter. Black-figure ware. About 525 B. C. Ht. 19¾ inches. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey. 1956.70. (See p. 83)*

BACK COVER: *Roundel from a kylix. Triptolemos Painter. Red-figure ware. About 490 B. C. Diam. 6½ inches. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. 1961.26. (See p. 94)*



*Amphora. Geometric style. 8th century B.C. Ht. 23 inches. Museum purchase. 1926.43.*

# GREEK VASE PAINTING

Since monumental Greek painting has not survived, vase painting gives us almost our only examples of Greek pictorial art. The subjects painted provide an unbroken visual record of the folkways, myths, morals, and daily life of a great people through several centuries. In fact, Greek vases illustrate the actual appearance of a great civilization, the way it looked to those who lived in it.

The paintings on the vases in our collection show the development of drawing from archaic, schematic ornamentation to the freer, more subtle naturalism of Greek classical art. The first three vases on the following pages bear designs painted on pale buff clay in black and red. All the other vases are decorated either in the black-figure or red-figure style. The black-figure style was developed in the 7th century B.C. Figures were painted on the clay surface in a colored, fluid clay called a slip. When the vase was fired, the iron content of the slip caused lustrous black silhouettes to appear. These silhouettes were often enlivened with engraved or incised lines. Details were usually painted in white and a color which ranged from pale violet to deep claret.

The red-figure style, which almost completely replaced the older technique by the last decade of the 6th century B.C., is the reverse of the black-figure style. The background was painted with slip and the red clay of the vase, left unpainted, served as the color for the figures. Details were then drawn or painted onto these figures.

"The amphorae are full of red and fragrant wine." (Aristophanes, *Ploutos*) "They found pickled slices of dolphins in amphorae." (Xenophon, *Anabasis*)

The amphora illustrated on the preceding page is a jar with two handles reaching from neck to body and was used for holding provisions, both liquid and solid.

The first style of Greek vase painting is called "geometric" from the forms used in the system of ornamentation. This same severe conception of form is also expressed in the shape of this vessel and in the abstract style of the figure-subject. The painter of the amphora did not attempt to render the horse naturalistically, but created a simplified memory-image that functions effectively as stylized decoration, consistent with the pure abstract shapes that surround the vase.

The alabastron illustrated below was a perfume jar. This one has a string hole at the neck so that it could be carried from the wrist or hung on the wall.

Sphinxes were ancient mythological creatures in Egyptian and Near-Eastern art. When intended to convey a meaning in early Greek times, they were generally symbols of death. The sphinx on this perfume jar is probably used only as decoration. When this alabastron was made, Corinth was a wealthy seaport, sending oil and perfume in beautiful vases all over the Mediterranean world.

*Alabastron. Corinthian. Black-figure ware. 7th century B.C. Ht. 6½ inches. Museum purchase. 1917. 132.*

*Olpe. Corinthian. Black-figure ware. 7th century B.C. Ht. 12¾ inches. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. 1962.36.*

A marvelous array of beasts, some real, others imaginary, enliven this beautifully shaped olpe. They face each other in friezes separated by solid and scale pattern bands. Two sedate sphinxes confront each other with riddles in the upper zone, while a deer unconcernedly grazes to the left. In the center, two lions roar at a bull and an ibis. At the bottom, a goat and a panther are about to spring at each other, while to the right another deer goes quietly on his way. Action and calm, near naturalism and fantasy, are combined with great decorative effect.

Decorative animal friezes were common to Mesopotamian and Assyrian art. This vase, manufactured at Corinth in the 7th century B.C., bears witness to the strong Oriental influence upon the art of that city when, as the leading seaport of Greece, it was in close contact with the countries of Asia Minor.

An olpe is a jug for ladling wine from a krater or storage jar into a wine cup.

*Amphora. Black-figure ware. 6th century B.C. Ht. 15 15/16 inches. Museum purchase. 1929.48.*

The earliest musicians were the gods. Hermes, according to legend, was born in the morning and by midday had invented the lyre by stretching four strings across a tortoise-shell. On his birthday he also stole fifty head of cattle from his brother, Apollo. However, he so delighted Apollo with his music that, in exchange for the lyre, Apollo allowed him to keep the cattle and gave him, as well, the golden staff of fortune and of riches. When Apollo played in Olympus, the gods forgot all else. Hermes also invented the shepherd's pipe for himself, from which he drew the most enchanting music. Athena invented the flute and, though she did not play the instrument herself, her genius covered the field of music. In the course of time, both Apollo and Athena were regarded as the patron god and goddess of music. On one side of this vase three gods are depicted. Athena, in the center, responds with gesture to the music played by Apollo on his lyre. Hermes glances back from the right, identifiable by his flat, broad-brimmed hat and his staff. The faun perhaps connotes his love of field and friendship with Apollo, protector of tender game.

Every nine years King Minos of Crete compelled Athens to send him seven maidens and seven youths as tribute. Cast into the Labyrinth, a dreaded maze from which none had ever escaped, they were devoured by the Minotaur, a monster, half human and half bull. Theseus, a young Athenian prince, volunteered to go to Crete as one of the victims in order that he might slay the Minotaur. He was aided by Minos' own daughter, Ariadne, who fell in love with him.

Inside this kylix or drinking cup the Tleson painter has portrayed the dramatic scene where Theseus, grasping the hairy brute by the horns, is about to thrust his sword through its neck. Since the Greeks watered their wine to transparency, the painting inside the cup could be viewed as one drank. The Tleson painter was one of the best known and most typical cup painters of the 6th century. This kylix is inscribed on both sides: *Tleson (son of) Nearchos has made me* (the kylix).

*Kylix. Tleson Painter. Black-figure ware. About 550 B.C. Ht. 6 inches. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. 1958.70.*

*Hydria. Black-figure ware. About 550 B.C. Ht. 18 inches. Museum purchase. 1950.261.*

Pictured on this vase is a quadriga, a chariot drawn by four horses abreast. A fully armed warrior rides with his charioteer, while a footsoldier stands on the right. Though the chariot had passed out of use in war among the Greeks ages before, it was still retained for races in the public games and for processions. On the shoulder of the vase, Hercules brings the three-headed dog, Cerberus, guardian of Hades, to the upper world, guided by Athena and Hermes. This was Hercules' last and most difficult labor.

This hydria, or water jar, was found at Vulci in the early 19th century, some sixty miles northwest of Rome, where some of the richest finds of Attic vases have been made. There, the Etruscans had imported Greek pottery because of its excellence. For a time this hydria was in the private collection of Lucian Bonaparte, Prince de Canino, brother of Napoleon I.

The eleventh labor of Hercules was to fetch golden apples from the Garden of the Hesperides. The tree that bore this fruit had been Mother Earth's wedding gift to Hera, and the goddess planted it in her own divine garden. Searching for the garden, Hercules was told by the river nymphs to ask directions of Nereus, the Old Man of the Sea (the Mediterranean), who knew all things. Following their advice, he seized the sea-god while he slept and bound him. Like all marine deities, Nereus assumed many forms, but Hercules did not unloose him until he prophesied how the coveted fruit could be won. Nereus advised Hercules not to pluck the apples himself, but to use Atlas, father of the Hesperides, as his agent. The hero followed these instructions with success.

In the main picture on this hydria, Nereus has awakened and struggles with his captor. On the shoulder, Athena the warrior-goddess, fully armed and brandishing a sharp spear, takes the reins and mounts her chariot. Protectress of Hercules, who stands before her in his lion pelt, it is she to whom he will offer the apples of the Hesperides. On the panel below is a decorative frieze of racing horsemen.

*Hydria. Attributed to the Painter of the Vatican G 43. Black-figure ware. 550-525 B.C. Ht. 17½ inches. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey. 1956. 69.*

The quadriga, a chariot drawn by four horses abreast, forms the decoration of this olpe. The center horses bore the brunt of the work. They were harnessed to a yoke attached to the chariot pole, while the outside horses were harnessed only by traces. Horses were trained to take the positions shown here when at rest; the pole-horses turn their heads inward, the trace-horses turn theirs outward. Chariot races were among the most popular events at the public games in Greece. As many as forty chariots might drive in a single race. They were celebrated with great pomp, heralds proclaiming each competitor. Afterwards, the owner of the winning quadriga received the victor's crown of laurel leaves.

*Olpe. Black-figure ware. About 530 B.C. Ht. 8¾ inches. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. 1961.22.*

*Hydria. Attributed to the Antimenes Painter. Black-figure ware. About 525 B.C. Ht. 19¾ inches. Gift of Florence Scott Libbey. 1956. 70.*

On the shoulder of this vase is depicted the first labor imposed on Hercules by King Eurystheus, which was to bring him the skin of the Nemean Lion. This enormous beast, whose pelt no weapon could wound, had laid waste whole regions and devoured their populations. Finding the lion, his mane smeared with the blood of his last victims, Hercules stunned him with a mighty blow of his club. He then threw aside his weapon and charged the enraged beast with his bare hands, choking him to death. Hercules was only able to skin the lion by using its own sharp claws. When he returned to Mycenae wearing the invulnerable pelt as armor and the head as a helmet, Eurystheus was so terrified by his prowess that he forbade Hercules ever again to enter the city.

The main picture below the shoulder shows a gathering of five deities. Apollo, playing the lyre, delights the others with his music. Hermes to the left is identified by his winged staff; Poseidon to the right, by his trident. The other two figures are Apollo's twin sister, Artemis, and his mother Leto. This vase is attributed to the Antimenes Painter, one of the outstanding vase painters of his day.

*Amphora with cover. Antimenes Painter. 525-500 B.C. Black-figure ware. Ht. 16½ inches. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. 1955.225.*

Ordered to bring the sash from the robe of the queen of the Amazons to the daughter of the king of Mycenae and Tiryns, whose service he had entered, Hercules found Queen Hippolyte ready to give him the sash of her own accord. But Hera, who hated Hercules, spread a rumor among the women warriors that their queen was in danger. A fierce battle ensued, which inspired the painting on the front of this amphora. In the center Hercules is about to slay the famous Amazon, Hippolyte, yet the precise moment of death is not represented. The Antimenes Painter was an artist of charm and even humor, who apparently continued to produce only black-figure vases after the great talents of the day were involved in the red-figure style.

*Kylix. Style close to the Epeleius and Euergides Painters. Red-figure ware. Late 6th century B.C. Ht. 5½ inches. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. 1956.59.*

A running stag decorates the interior of this kylix. Stags had been among the favorite animals appearing on vases of a much earlier period. Later, the stag hunt became a frequent subject. The style of this painting is close to that of the Epeleius and Euergides Painters, cup-painters of the late 6th century. They preferred subjects in movement. Typical of their style, this stag appears to have been executed rapidly in a strong, flowing line. The cup presents a striking profile, beautiful in its proportions and almost devoid of decoration. Two red lines of punctuation mark the transition between stem and bowl. A "reserved" or unpainted band is left at the base of the foot. A famous Greek's apostrophe to a kylix might well describe this piece:

"To the maker of it may good fortune chance
For its proportions and simplicity." (Antiphanes, *The Initiate*)

The continuous band around this cup shows the flight of Odysseus from the cave of the Cyclops, Polyphemus, who has dined on the flesh of half his comrades. Odysseus intoxicated the monster, then gouged out his single, hideous eye with a burning stake. The next morning the Greek adventurers escaped Polyphemus' clutch by suspending themselves under rams as the enraged and blinded Cyclops let his herd out to pasture.

*Kylix. Black-figure ware. 550-525 B.C. Ht. 7⅛ inches. Museum purchase. 1927.97.*

*Amphora. Attributed to the Achelous Painter. Black-figure ware. Late 6th century B.C. Ht. 13 inches. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. 1952.65.*

Arriving in Calydon to woo Deianira, the king's daughter, Hercules found her courted by a strange suitor, the river-god, Achelous. In the furious contest that followed, Achelous changed himself into a serpent and then a bull in a strenuous effort to subdue his opponent. The principal painting on this amphora shows Hercules gripping the lunging bull by one horn. In the tale, Hercules hurled him to the ground with such force that the horn broke off and Achelous acknowledged defeat. Hercules then claimed the lovely Deianira as his wife. On the reverse side, Pasiphae, wife of King Minos of Crete, is shown riding the extraordinarily beautiful bull with whom she fell in love. Their offspring was the terrible Minotaur, whom Minos kept in the Labyrinth, and who was finally slain by Theseus. The Achelous Painter was one of the more important artists among those who produced the Leagros Group of vases. These artists painted the last great group of Attic black-figure vases. About 510 B.C., Leagros was a universally admired youth, "the beautiful boy," to whom these painters frequently inscribed their vases.

*Hydria. Attributed to the Edinburgh Painter. Black-figure ware. 525-500 B.C. Ht. 17 inches. Museum purchase. 1955.42.*

Hercules searched for the Garden of the Hesperides to obtain the golden apples. According to the legend pictured on the front of this hydria, on his way he met Cycnus, son of Ares, god of war, who challenged him to a duel. Hercules quickly slew his aggressor, but was immediately confronted by "the fury of the ruthless god," Ares, who would avenge his son's death. Zeus, chief of the Olympian gods, hurled them apart with a lightning bolt, so that these two, his own sons, would not spill each other's blood. Athena, comforter of Hercules in his labors, stands behind him. To the right watches Pelopeia, mother of Cycnus. A frieze of four athletes with their trainer decorates the shoulder, and below is a harpy flanked by lions. This hydria is attributed to the Edinburgh Painter, who is related to the painters of the Leagros Group of vases. Their favorite shape was the hydria. One of their most frequent subjects was a quarrel between two heroes, especially episodes from the life of Hercules.

"Just now I filled my pitcher at the fountain; it's a difficult task, with the crowd and the din and the clatter of pots." (Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*)

This scene at a fountain, showing girls filling their water pots, illustrates the use of a hydria. The jars pictured here are identical in shape to the actual vase itself. As the piping of water into houses was not usual at this time, the fountain house was a popular center. Like other places of special activity, this one had its own spirits. Accordingly, the girl to the right of the spout is placing a wreath in honor of the water nymphs. The figures are mostly, though not entirely, archaistic in style; and perspective, as we understand it, is not used. Still, a complex scheme of overlapping forms definitely suggests a third dimension. This shows the trend in late 6th century painting toward the more naturalistic considerations of the classical style. The shoulder of the vase depicts Priam's Departure, a Trojan legend subject favored for hydrias of this period. The artist, known today as the A.D. Painter, specialized in fountain pictures.

*Hydria. A.D. Painter. About 520 B.C. Black-figure ware. Ht. 23⅜ inches. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. 1961.23.*

*Kylix. Euergides Painter, Euergides Potter. Red-figure ware. About 515 B.C. Ht. 4 9/16 inches. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. 1961.25.*

On one side of this kylix, a scene from Hercules' labor to obtain the golden apples of the Hesperides in shown. On the other side, the artist has painted three fighting hoplites, the heavily armed footsoldiers of the Greeks. Their weapons consist of circular shields, helmets, greaves of bronze, and lances. The cock inside the cup is a masterpiece of design. Historically, the decoration shows that the painter was still dependent upon the motifs of black-figure kylikes.

In the drawing of the figures, the Euergides Painter also adheres to black-figure conventions. Using a formula similar to the age-old figure style of Egypt, he shows the most characteristic view of each part of the body. Torsos are shown from the front, the lower bodies from the side. All the figures are flattened in this way so that the action of the group occurs on the single curving plane of the cup, with little suggestion of depth.

The third labor of Hercules was to take alive the beautiful deer of Mt. Ceryneia, sacred to Diana. She was a swift, dappled creature with brazen hooves and golden horns like a stag. Killing her would have been easy, but Hercules hunted her a whole year before she tired of the chase. Even then he had to lame her with an arrow before he could capture her. The artist portrays Hercules in the lion's skin, a quiver on his back, holding the deer by her antlers. From the right comes his protectress, Athena, with tall helmet and great aegis, or protective cape, her right hand held high in salutation. This painting is a vigorous, monumental work by the Achelous Painter, a leading artist of the important Leagros Group.

*Amphora. The Achelous Painter. Black-figure ware. About 510 B.C. Ht. 19¾ inches. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. 1958.69.*

*Lekythos. Black-figure ware. Early 5th century B.C. Ht. 10½ inches. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. 1952.66.*

*Lekythos. Black-figure ware on white ground. 5th century B.C. Ht. 11 inches. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. 1947.62.*

Hercules slaying the giant, Alkyoneus, is depicted on this vase (left). Hercules enters the giant's cave from the left, as Alkyoneus slumbers on the ground beneath flowering boughs. The small winged god of sleep, Hypnos, darts over him. Fate was not often generous in providing him with such an easy opportunity for dispatching an enemy, and Hercules was anxious to take advantage of the situation.

The lekythos was a one-handled jug used for oil and unguents and as an offering for the dead. The shape of the vase was well adapted for its use. The bowl-like mouth made a convenient funnel for filling, while the narrow neck caused the fluid to flow out in a thin stream or even drop by drop.

The painting on the lekythos at right shows the hero, Achilles, lying in wait for Troilus, youngest son of King Priam of Troy. He must kill Troilus, for it was fated that if this prince could attain the age of twenty, Troy would not fall to the Greeks. Troilus is not represented, but his sister, Polyxena, is shown drawing water at a fountain near the place of ambush. She appears to have discovered Achilles, and in the myth she signaled Troilus to flee. Achilles, however, overtook and killed the young prince. On the wider surface of a larger vase the scene would lose its credibility, but on the sharp curve of this small lekythos, the two figures are on opposite sides, so that Achilles indeed seems hidden.

*Panathenaic Amphora. Kleophrades Painter. Black-figure ware. About 490 B.C. Ht. 24 15/16 inches. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. 1961.24.*

"In earth baked by fire came the fruit of the olive in richly painted walls of vases." (Pindar, *Nemean*)

On the front of this amphora appears the goddess Athena, in whose honor the greatest Athenian festival, the Panathenaen, was held every four years. In the Panathenaic games the first prize was a garland of leaves from the sacred olive trees of Athena, together with a large vase, such as this one, filled with oil from the same trees. The principal subject was a standard one for a prize amphora. Athena stands in warlike attitude between two columns surmounted by cocks, symbols of the fighting spirit. The inscription is: TON AOE NEOEN AVON, meaning a prize from the games at Athens. About her shoulders the goddess wears the dreadful aegis, a protective cape bordered with coiling serpents. The most eminent authority on Greek vases, Sir John Beazley, states that "no Panathenaic Athenas give such an impression of power as the Kleophrades Painter's." This is mainly due to the monumental form of the figure and its stance. Pegasus, the winged steed, always appears as Athena's shield device on prize amphorae by this master. On the reverse side is a picture of a pankration match, a combination of boxing and wrestling.

This amphora has the characteristic shape of the Panathenaic vase with its swelling body, short thin neck, pinched base and small foot. The old black-figure technique was retained for this kind of official vase. The Kleophrades Painter, whose name was Epiktetos II, was one of two great vase painters of the early 5th century B.C. There are only twelve known completely preserved Panathenaic amphorae by him.

Nike, goddess of victory, is shown on this stamnos offering a libation to the sea god, Poseidon (Neptune), and to Athena or to a goddess who is probably Amphitrite, Poseidon's wife. Poseidon can be identified by his trident, but the seated goddess has no attributes. The scene appears to be one of arbitration or reconciliation.

This picture is an early work of the Syleus Painter, who worked about 500 to 475 B.C., concurrent with the Persian Wars. This was a time of political stress, yet the finest work in red-figure vase painting was executed then. He was one of the better Athenian red-figure painters of large pots. His figures are nicely articulated, yet his great interest is still, like that of the early style of red-figure ware, in design. The stamnos is a high-shouldered, short-necked vase, with two handles set horizontally. It was used as a wine jar.

The owl on this skyphos is the emblem of Athena, goddess of wisdom, as are the olive boughs that enframe him. The owl was worshipped on the Acropolis before the cult of Athena sprang up, and appears on Athenian coins. The skyphos was a deep cup with two handles. It was popular with country people, was commonly used by Hercules, and, in vase painting, cups of this shape frequently appear in the hands of revelers.

*Stamnos. The Syleus Painter. Red-figure ware. 500-475 B.C. Ht. 14⅛ inches. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. 1956.58.*

*Skyphos. Red-figure ware. 500-400 B.C. Ht. 3⅜ inches. Museum purchase. 1912.1226.*

*Kylix. Triptolemos Painter. Red-figure ware. About 490 B. C. Ht. 5 7/16 inches. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. 1961.26.*

Military necessity motivated athletic training in Greece. Sports were included in religious festivals and were encouraged by the great Olympian games. Athletics reached their highest development during the half century in which this vase was made. Bodily beauty combined with strength became the ideal attainment. From this time on the vase painters found their finest models in the gymnasiums, so-named because the athletes exercised unclothed (*gymnoi*), as we see them here.

On the roundel inside and on one outer side, boxers wind thongs on their hands under the supervision of trainers. They leave their fingers free so they can form clenched fists. On the reverse outer side, javelin throwers are fixing and testing amentums or throwing slings. The amentum was wound around the center of the javelin, with a finger loop left at the end. When the javelin was thrown, the amentum unwound spinning the shaft and increasing its penetrative power. Great emphasis was placed on throwing in athletic competition, since the javelin was used in both hunting and in warfare. The inscription in the roundel, one common to drinking cups, means "beautiful," and refers to the young athlete. There are extremely few surviving kylikes by the Triptolemos Painter. His style is recognized by his well-filled roundel compositions and strongly-built athletes.

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